

CONTRACT SPECIALIST ADDED TO STAFF

James W. Myers recently joined the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program as a contract specialist. His primary duties include managing the contracts for Maricopa county that provide services for refugees.



"It's an exciting time in the Refugee Resettlement Program," Jim said. "We have recently restructured the service delivery process by consolidating services, in addition to the development of a new coordination of services. All of this will allow the contractors to explore innovative approaches to better serve the needs and enhance the delivery of services to our clients."

Jim comes to the RRP having spent more than 12 years with various departments and programs within the DES. During his time with the state, he has served both on the interview and delivery sides. In his current position, he is handling the actual contracts that allow the providers to deliver some of the services. In all these posts, he has provided his expertise in compliance with federal, state and local requirements.

Before his service with the state, Jim sold residential, commercial and industrial real estate in

the Phoenix metropolitan area for more than 10 years. He also wrote a book titled, *How to Sell Your Own House*, has appeared at the State Senate Committee to promote a new bill concerning real estate and conducted real estate seminars.

Originally from Massachusetts, Jim and his wife, Ophelia, reside in the West Valley. They are currently in the process of adopting three children: Ophelia's niece from the Philippines and Ophelia's two orphaned younger brothers. ■

The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Journal is published for the service providers, community-based organizations and all those who assist or who are interested in refugee-resettlement issues; it is your newsletter. Because of this, we encourage your participation and contributions in the form of topics for articles, articles you find in other publications, comments, questions, concerns and, of course, letters to the editor.

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SOMALI BANTU SEMINAR

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS PROVIDE INSIGHT

More than 100 people gathered Sept. 15 at Arizona State University to hear two experts discuss the history and culture of the Somali Bantu, a group of approximately 12,000 refugees who began arriving in the United States earlier this year. Two Arizona cities, Phoenix and Tucson, are among the top destinations in the country for resettlement of the Somali Bantu refugees. Through consultations among National Voluntary Agencies and their local community-based affiliates, the Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and State

Refugee Coordinators, cities nationwide were identified as the most favorable resettlement sites for the Somali Bantu. Among the criteria for selecting sites were the availability of refugee resettlement expertise, welcoming communities and the likelihood of the Somali Bantu to successfully transition to life in the United States within the community. U.S. communities were divided into three tiers for the resettlement of the Somali Bantu refugees, during an

anticipated two-year arrival period. Tier one, within which Phoenix and Tucson are included, are the cities slated to resettle the Somali Bantu first. Besides Phoenix and Tucson, other major resettlement sites for the Somali Bantu include Denver, Houston and San Diego.

The day-long lecture and, at times, energetically interactive sessions were presented by Daniel Van Lehman. Currently he is a member of the faculty at Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University in Portland, Ore., and a former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees field officer in the Dagahaley Refugee Camp in Tanzania from



1992 to 1994. Also presenting was Omar Eno, a Somali Bantu himself who is also on the faculty of Portland State University in its history department. Van Lehman and Eno have traveled the country presenting this orientation.

"We're not here today to cause problems," Eno said during the introduction to his discussion on the history of the Somali Bantu. "We're here to paint the profile. It is up to you to come up with the strategy."

During the morning session, both professors gave an overview of the Somali Bantu's history for the past 200 years. The explained a history that includes slavery under the sultan of Zanzibar's reign, self-organization into a campaign for their own freedom, self-resettlement in the inter-riverine area of the Juba and Shabelle rivers in southern Somalia, conscripted labor under Italian colonial rule, resettlement into Kenyan and Tanzanian refugee camps and finally resettlement in the United States.

Despite their almost continual movement during the last 200 years, the Somali Bantu are an agrarian

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A LETTER FROM THE STATE COORDINATOR

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to return the *Arizona Refugee Resettlement Journal* into circulation. After long anticipating its return, we now look forward to sharing the latest news and information about refugee issues that relate to Arizona. In this edition, you will read about some of the latest developments in Arizona refugee resettlement efforts.

I recently returned from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's Annual Consultation, where I was joined by staff and other Arizona refugee resettlement colleagues. Permeating the consultation was the ambiguous future of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, rooted in the reduced admissions of refugees and corresponding funding following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Coming home to Arizona, I was nevertheless hopeful and thankful for the noble cause of refugee resettlement.

In that spirit, as we near Thanksgiving, I want to share some of the things for which I am so thankful:

- I am thankful to live in America where we enjoy hallmark freedoms.
- I am thankful to live in a nation where torture, forced separation from family, annihilation of communities and genocide are not the usual way of life.
- I am thankful that our nation remains a refuge for the persecuted and oppressed.
- I am thankful that our state remains strongly committed to responding to the needs of refugees and is recognized nationally for its excellence in refugee resettlement.
- I am thankful for the dedication, sacrifice, expertise and long hours of service to refugees provided day in and day out by Arizona's refugee-service providers.
- I am thankful for the many volunteers and donations by Arizonans to help refugees make the difficult transition to life in their new homeland.
- I am thankful for the strength, resilience and courage of so many refugees who demonstrate what it means to survive life-threatening circumstances and inhumanity and become responsible and contributing members of American society.
- I am thankful that Liberty still watches over the Golden Door.

I look forward to working with you to build on Arizona's humanitarian commitment that has literally saved thousands of refugees' lives. Together, we will help maintain our nation's honorable heritage of sharing liberty and hope.

Happy Thanksgiving!



Charles Shipman ■



REFUGEE Arizona Refugee Resettlement Journal resettlement

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LIVELY DISCUSSION CONCERNING NEW ARRIVALS

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Every attempt is being made to resettle the Somali Bantu as groups, whether these groups are bound by blood, language, geography or spiritual (as in dance groups) bonds. As experience shows, when refugees are resettled with their support systems intact, the process of adapting to the new lifestyle and developing self-sufficiency goes much more smoothly.

MEDICAL PRACTICES

Many times the first experience the Somali Bantu people have had with Western medicine is in the camps, according to Eno and Van Lehman. Even there, the hospitals and clinics were viewed as places to go to die. They, like many rural people, practice herbal and traditional medicine. But Eno assured the audience that the Bantu are open to using Western techniques if they are available and when they work well.

"Broken bones were healed using a heated piece of metal," Eno said. "But that was used because nothing else was available. Burning as healing has been abandoned now that other techniques are available. It's a matter of adapting a new custom."

Women, according to several audience members and to the professors, prefer women doctors and nurses, especially when dealing with obstetrical/gynecological issues.

LANGUAGE

"There is a myth that Somalia is homogeneous," said Eno. "We speak one language, we practice one religion, we have one currency, we have one government. The truth is, we have at least six languages, one religion that is practiced in many ways, many currencies and no government. Currently, there are 10 factions who claim power."

What's a caring service provider to do? Fear not, say Eno and Van Lehman.

The "government-sponsored" language, the *lingua franca*, is called Maha, and most Somali Bantu understand and can get by in this language. However, Eno cautions that this is the language of the ruling clans, the oppressors of their pasts. As long as the translator does not hold himself or herself above the Bantu client, he or she respects the client for the person the client is, things will be fine, according to Eno.

Many of the Somali Bantus speak Maay as their native language. Eno suggested that service providers would be able to work more effectively with their clients and glean more detailed information if interviews were conducted in this language.

These are two of the seven languages. The others are spoken by the Somali Bantu who originated from different areas in Southeastern Africa. These languages are: Yao, Makua, Nyasa, Zigwa and Zaramo.

By the end of the day—which was longer than anticipated due to the enthusiastic and information-hungry audience—the service providers and other attendees had a much clearer understanding of the Somali Bantu people's past and present. With Profs. Eno's and Van Lehman's help, our Arizona communities will become welcoming, enriching, nurturing environments where our newest arrivals can build a better life.

For more information, please see the professors' Web site at www.culturalorientation.net. ■



During the afternoon session, the audience was invited to participate more actively in the discussions



More than 100 people attended a discussion Sept. 15 on the culture and history of the Somali Bantu.

Phoenix and Tucson are two of the major resettlement cities in the country for resettlement of this group.

JUNE 20, 2003

WORLD REFUGEE DAY CELEBRATED IN

The resettlement agencies, mutual-assistance associations and community-based organizations in both Phoenix and Tucson partook in celebrations commemorating World Refugee June 20.

The celebration in Phoenix was multifaceted, with profiles of refugees displayed in the atrium of City Hall for the week leading up to World Refugee Day, a mayoral proclamation, tour of City Hall and an interactive exhibit. This exhibit had three sections: homeland, a room that highlighted some of the original countries of those newly arrived in the United States; refugee camp, a simulated refugee camp, complete with displays of food rations and a typical tent used for housing; and United States of America, which highlighted contributions that refugees have made to this country, including profiles of prominent refugees, such as Madeline Albright and Albert Einstein. ■



N PHOENIX, TUCSON



FAMILY SETTLES IN

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and read the lists carefully in hopes of seeing his name there.

In late August, he finally found his and his family's names. They packed up their meager belongings, jumped in a car for the half-hour trip to the Nairobi airport, and two days later, they were in Atlanta. Ali-Shamani's assistant, Ahmed, met them at the Phoenix airport the next day, Sept. 3. Salim's favorite part of the whole experience was landing in the plane.

"So far, we have had few difficulties," Osman said. "We appreciate our apartment and all its furnishings, the medical insurance and the cash assistance. Our apartment is so much better than any of the camps, and it is even better than our traditional houses."

While Farihiya is very happy about being here, she is a bit overwhelmed with shopping at supermarkets, paying with ATM cards and finding transportation.

"There are so many things available in the stores; they're so well-stocked," she said. "When I get out of the store, I wonder, 'How do I get all this home?'"

Despite their recent arrival, the couple has already settled into a routine. But Osman is still looking for work. When he talks about not being able to find a job yet, his otherwise smooth, open, worry-free face becomes taut and lined with worry; his feelings of frustration are tangible. In fact, the issue of employment shortly after arrival was the single area where he wishes it could be made better.

For little Salim, the biggest issue is school, or rather the inability to go to school. Even though he is 5, his papers list him as 4. The local school district would not allow him to enroll until next year. He's sad, because he wants to be like all the other "big boys" in his apartment complex.

But he is not completely lonely during the day when his new buddies are off readin' and 'ritin'. He has lots of cousins, aunts and uncles to keep him company. Farihiya is one of 10 children, and on Sept. 5, two days after she and her family arrived, her father and her siblings arrived. Additionally, that same day, Farihiya's uncle and his wife and five children arrived in Phoenix. This extended family all lives in the same apartment complex as do Osman and his family.

Osman and Farihiya's primary dream has come true, and they are extremely happy. But they continue to dream. A year from now, the couple hopes to accomplish at least these three things:

- "To be a part of American society.
- To own our own car.
- To not need a translator to speak to you during our interview next year."

They will reach all of these goals and many more. ■

Special thanks to Charles Shipman, Gail Gibbons, Ashraf Nasr and Mohamed Ali-Sharmani for their help in coordinating the interview for this article.

PROFS. SHARE INSIGHT INTO SOMALI HISTORY

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Prof. Eno (left) and Prof. Van Lehman shared insights into the history and culture of the Somali Bantu. Twelve thousand of these refugees began arriving in the United States earlier this year.

people; they are not nomadic, unlike the dominant clans of today and of the past in Somali. The Somali Bantus' primary desire has always been to be allowed to farm in peace, according to Van Lehman. In fact, in times of upheaval—frequent during the recent history in Somalia—agriculture has been the sustaining element of the country's chaotic economy; it is what has allowed them to trade with other countries for goods and services.

Because the Bantu are—and always have been—a nonviolent, subjugated, oftentimes illiterate minority in Somalia, their productive inter-riverine lands were taken from them, many times through illicit, unfair and/or violent means.

"This is history; I cannot change it," Eno said many times during the morning's presentation. "It is the history that is written, and it is the history on which the government has based its decision to resettle these people in America."

Armed with the basic information about their history and culture, the two presenters turned to more practical issues during the afternoon session and invited the audience to participate more actively. The discussions, though at times bordering on the politically charged, were centered around what is best for the new arrivals. Topics included religion, employment, family life, medical practices and language.

RELIGION

"The Somali Bantu are nearly 100 percent Muslim," according to Eno. "But, they practice an Islam that has many native undertones."

These "undertones" include spiritual or ceremonial dancing, a very important aspect of Bantu culture. In fact, some clans and groups are formed around maternal dance groups, where the ceremonies have been handed down for generations from the time when the Bantu originally migrated from the Niger River. Van Lehman shared that when the Somali Bantu were in the camps away from the strong influence—and sometimes pressure—of the more powerful clans, they would break into spontaneous dance. The more powerful clans in the camps would forcibly stop the dances because they believed dancing in praise was not allowed under "true" Islam.

EMPLOYMENT

Even though the Somali Bantu have traditionally been farmers, they have taken the menial jobs in the camps where they were resettled. Always treated as second-class citizens, they were the "muscle" of the camps and their villages: hauling, building, cleaning, repairing, but never serving or touching the rations.

Despite this history of "menial" labor, the professors assured the service providers that the newly arriving Bantu people are happy to accept the entry-level positions available to them when they first are resettled here.

"They are very capable, adaptable people," Van Lehman said. "Even in the camps in 1992, they were building structures, repairing equipment and developing systems to grow trees in the desert."

Van Lehman stressed the fact that many of the Somali Bantu would much prefer the agrarian lifestyle. However, it is the service providers' responsibility to clarify that this lifestyle can only be a sideline, hobby-type pursuit, especially at the beginning of their lives in this country.

FAMILY LIFE

The Somali Bantu have lived in extended families in typically more permanent structures. In the camps, they were provided with tents, but many of the families used the tents to cover walls built of adobe bricks or sticks and branches.

Both Van Lehman and Eno quelled the belief that many Bantu are polygamous. While this may have been true back in the farming days of the sultan, it is no longer a reality for most Somali Bantu families. In the few cases where it is true, these people understand that to be relocated to the United States, they must choose one woman to be the wife; the other wives can be named aunts or somehow related to the family.

*"The Somali
Bantu's primary
desire has
always been
to be allowed
to farm in peace."*

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UPDATE ON RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES

The Tucson International Alliance of Refugee Communities, like most agencies dealing with refugees, has recently begun its new fiscal year. The organization successfully applied for and received all the grant money it needed to continue its wide array of programs and some funds for beginning new programs. These include a grant from the Community Services Administration for a subcontractorship/partnership with Pima College Adult Education to provide linguistically and culturally appropriate services and training to refugees.

These services are:

- Employment readiness services and workshops.
- Finance and financial planning workshops.
- Driver training education.
- Computer training.
- Refugee women services.

TIARC also received grant funds to provide elder services for refugees. Under this program, TIARC will organize cultural and entertainment activities, field trips to museums, concerts and theaters; provide workshops on health, nutrition, Social Security and Medicare; coordinate workshops on English as a second language; and provide technical assistance in the naturalization process.

Additionally, TIARC will provide case management for up to 20 elder clients. The organization will give priority to interventions which can remove barriers at

the system level over those which help a client one time without solving the problem.

Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona Inc. has a new program, called Job Express, that provides much-needed transportation services for the Southern Arizona refugee community. Though this is a new service to refugees, Job Express has been brokering transportation for low-income and working-poor families, helping them obtain and retain employment and has assisted more than 3,500 families in Pima, Yuma, Cochise and Santa Cruz counties, since 1998.

"We are eager to initiate this new component," said Irma Yepez-Perez, program coordinator. "We will be working together with a team of experts from refugee resettlement agencies to help the families get to child-care, training and employment sites and ultimately to help them gain self-sufficiency."

For more information, please call Yepez-Perez at (520) 388-9153.

Association for Supportive Child Care, located in Tempe, was recently awarded a contract to administer the child-care program for refugees in Maricopa County. The program will assist refugees with finding and paying for child care while they learn new job skills, pursue their education or work.

For more information, call (480) 829-0500, ext. 112.

SOMALI COUPLE'S DREAM COMES TRUE

After living in refugee camps since 1992, checking lists regularly for four months and hoping and praying for the seemingly impossible, Osman Mohamed Dayow, 25, a Somali Bantu, and his young family finally found their names on the list of those to be resettled in the United States.

"I thought there would never be a chance that we would come to America," said Osman through translator Mohamed Ali-Sharmani, Ph.D., a case manager for the Phoenix office of the International Rescue Committee. "It was too far off to hope for. It is really a dream come true to be in America."

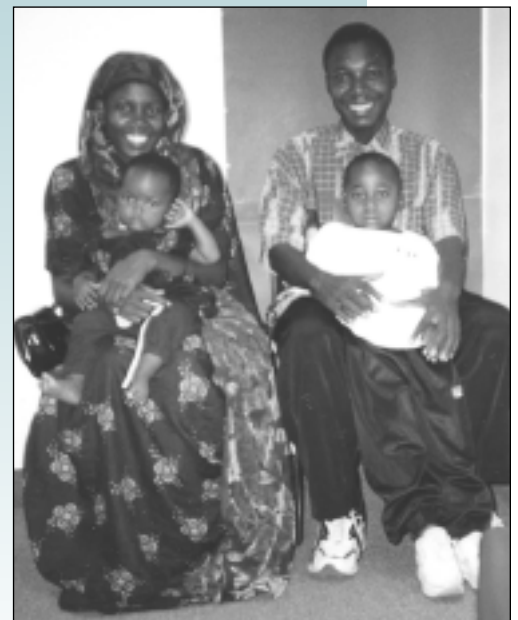
He and his wife, Farhiya Abdi Ahmed, 19, met in Ifo, a small part of the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. They married and started their lives together. Soon, their son, Salim Osman, now 5 years old, was born. The family was then relocated to Kakuma, where they spent one year and where their daughter, Fatuma, now 1 year old, was born.

In the camps, Osman worked as a tailor, while Farhiya worked in their home weaving sleeping mats, called *derin*, out of plant fibers.

The couple long dreamed of being resettled in a more peaceful country, a place where they could raise

and educate their children, a place where they could pursue their own happiness, a place to call home. This long-sought-after dream became closer to a reality in 2000 when the United States agreed to consider the Somali Bantu for resettlement in this country.

But there was still a lot of waiting to do. It wasn't until May this year when the lists of those to be resettled started to be posted in the camps. Every three or four days, new lists were posted. Osman would walk to this posting area



Osman Mohamed Dayow with his wife, Farhiya Abdi, their son, Salim Osman, and daughter, Fatuma.

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